**Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING)**

**(Ethiopian Highlands)**

**Brief Report on SLATE Training**

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**ILRI Campus, Addis Ababa**

1. **Introduction**

The Africa RISING program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government’s Feed the Future initiative. Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING is creating opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base. The Africa RISING project is operational in West Africa, East and Southern Africa and Ethiopian Highlands. In Ethiopia, the main aim of the project is to identify and validate solutions to the problems experienced by small-holder crop-livestock farmers in the Highlands.

Capacity building on various research approaches and survey tools can be an entry point to enhance the knowledge of local partners, and helps to build partnership with different institutions. The Sustainable Livelihoods Asset Evaluation (SLATE) tool, developed by ILRI, is one diagnostic tool that can help to integrate biophysical and social issues, and facilitate household characterisations and the identification of farm typologies that require various interventions.

1. **Objectives of the training**

A training of trainers (ToT) was organized from 1-5 April 2013 with the objectives of a) Familiarizing Africa RISING project sites team members and Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) Innovation Platform (IP) facilitators with the SLATE tool, and b) Identifying household typologies based on the five livelihood assets (human, physical, social, natural and financial capitals) for some trial NBDC kebeles.

1. **Processes of the training**
   1. **Training participants and composition**

The training was organized by Africa RISING and NBDC. As a result, the training participants were from both Africa RISING (four sites) and NBDC (three sites). The number and affiliations of the participants is shown in Table 1 and Appendix 1.

**Table 1. Composition of participants from Africa RISING and NBDC sites**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Projects | Sites | No. of participants | Participants institution |
| NBDC | Diga | 2 | Bako Research Center and Diga Woreda Agri Office |
| Fogera | 2 | Andassa Research Center and Fogera Woreda Livestock Agency |
| Jeldu | 2 | Holetta Research Center and Jeldu Woreda Agri Office |
| Africa RISING | Amhara | 3 | D/ Birhan Research Center and Basona Worena Woreda Agri Office |
| South | 3 | Areka and Worabe Research Centers, and Hadiya Zone Agricultrual Department |
| Oromia | 3 | Sinana Research Center and Sinana Woreda Agri Office |
| Tigray | 3 | TARI and Alamata Research Center, and Endamehoni Woreda Agri Office |
| Others |  | 10 | ILRI/IWMI, ICRAF, CIMMYT, CIP, ICRISAT |

* 1. **Presentations before the field work**

Initially, Dr. Peter Thorne, Africa RISING project coordinator, welcomed the training participants. Following the welcoming address, participants introduced themselves and clarified their expectations based on a river line approach presented by facilitators (Appendix 2). Dr. Peter Thorne and Mr. Zelalem Lema from ILRI then presented the background of the Africa RISING and NBDC (IP) projects, respectively. Dr. Amare Haileslassie (ICRISAT/ILRI) also presented and shared experiences and findings from a previous SLATE exercise conducted by Africa RISING at Bekoje, Arsi (<https://www.dropbox.com/home/Africa%20RISING%20-%20Ethiopia/SLATE%20training%201-5%20April%20%202013/2%20-%20Presentations>). Lastly, the resource persons gave a demonstration of the SLATE software tool and the trainees gained some hands-on experience with it .

* 1. **Field work**

The field work activities were from 02-04 April 2013. Initially, training organisers identified and selected Seriti, Chelanko and Kulu Gelan Kebeles from Jeldu wereda based on consultations from NBDC team members and IP facilitators. A total of 70 farm households were considered in each Keble based on the previous survey experience from early win project of Africa RISING in Bekoje, Arsi. Out of the 70 farm households, the interviewers use 20 in each Kebele as key informants and 50 for household survey respondents. The interviewee households were stratified into female and male groups for the identification of livelihood assets. Each trainee group merged indicators identified from the men’s and women’s groups and then produced and printed the final household questionnaires to be applied in each of the three Kebeles. The households considered for the survey were diverse in terms of gender, wealth and age composition. Finally, the trainees entered the household data of their respective Kebele using SLATE tool.

* 1. **Presentations after the field work**

A trainee group representative was appointed by each Kebele team to present the feedback in relation to training facilitation, field survey and SLATE tool (<https://www.dropbox.com/home/Africa%20RISING%20-%20Ethiopia/SLATE%20training%201-5%20April%20%202013/2%20-%20Presentations/Group%20Presentations>).

1. **Reflections on facilitation and methodological issues that need further actions/interventions**

* Determination of sampling size of key informants and household size need to be based on logical justifications.
* Criteria need to be set for selection of key informants and households to have representatives in terms of social categories, and geographical representations. This approach can avoid bias on the selection of key informants and household respondents.
* Adequate time allocation is necessary for identification and evaluation of indicators.
* Different approaches in 3 Kebeles – some included key informants in survey/ some excluded – which is best?
* Similarity/differences in questionnaires from each Kebele based on differences in sites especially for key basic information across sites must be decided because some lists are more detailed than others. Merging indicators from 3 Kebeles would be convenient for analysis but lists of indicators could be exhaustive. Reducing list could exclude key incomes/ niche assets. AR wants to capture all typologies rather than excluding any of the typologies.
* Methods need to be designed to capture notes while interacting with key informants and household respondents.
* Discussion of indicators, weight and score, and pre-testing the questionnaire together with the enumerators/interviewers is relevant to have a consensus on approach, an equal level of understanding and more reliable information. Provision of relative weights for each indicator can be difficult for the farmers if there are long list of indicators. Similarly, the relationships between scores and weights are complex – issues with lack of negative scores – did not adequately show differences between rich/ poor farmers and their relative dependence on different sources of capital. Enumerators’ skill to challenge / question the farmers answer/ give examples of positive/ negative contribution is not the same.
* Demonstration of indicators with pictures and use of grains for weighting can help to improve interactive process and minimise enumerators’ bias and incorporate participatory process.
* Incentive mechanisms for the farmers that participate during interview should be in line with the local system.
* Enumerators need to understand the local language to avoid language barriers during the survey work.
* There should be a standard for household characteristics information collection while producing household questionnaires of each Kebele.
* Meeting place for the data collection need to be decided in consultation with the DAs or the community ahead of the survey work.
* Material and equipment such as field bag, binder, camera and stationeries should be available during the field work.

1. **Reflection on the Slate tool**

**Trainees:**

* The tool brings full message of the livelihoods asset of the household
* It is a good tool and we can practice it in our areas
* It gives a chance for community to learn from one another (experience sharing)
* It is good but it doesn’t look at the economic level of household: inputs and outputs
* It is good and broad addressing all livelihoods issues
* It is good if we make it more user friendly
* The tool is good but it requires more time for data entering

**Resource persons:**

* The tool is used for identifying indicators and it depends on how we develop the indicators
* The report of the tool depends on the weight and the score which requires us to carefully get the real weight and score. This requires good understanding of the data collectors and the farmers.
* We need to be very careful in identifying and categorizing data, for instance, on natural indicators do we put rented land and shared lands as natural or in the other asset categories.

1. **The way forward**

The training organisers expressed their gratitude to the resource persons and active participation of the trainees. They also mentioned their satisfaction for achieving the theoretical and practical (fieldwork) training sessions. Finally, they noted that end of April 2013 would be a proposed time to start the actual survey work in the four Africa RISING sites.

**Appendix 1. List of training participants**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Name** | **Organization** | **Telephone** | **Fax** | **E-mail address** |
| 1 | Abiyot Aragaw | CIP | 911354369 |  | [abiyotaragaw2005@yahoo.com](mailto:abiyotaragaw2005@yahoo.com) |
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| 3 | Belay Dejen | Fogera Agricultural Office | 918094921 |  |  |
| 4 | Beneberu Teferra | Debre Birhan Agricultural Research Center | 920634622 |  | [beneberu2001@yahoo.com](mailto:beneberu2001@yahoo.com) |
| 5 | Dawit Abate | Sinana Agricultural Research Center | 911771874 |  | [dawit\_40@yahoo.com](mailto:dawit_40@yahoo.com) |
| 6 | Fikre Darie | Hadiya Zone Agricultrual Department | 912039418 | 465552436 |  |
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| 9 | Hagos Solomon | Endamohoni Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development | 914215970 |  | [hagosolo@gmail.com](mailto:hagosolo@gmail.com) |
| 10 | Kidane Wolde | Tigray Agricultural Research Institute | 914169305 | 347742206 | [kidanew2009@gmail.com](mailto:kidanew2009@gmail.com) |
| 11 | Kindu Mekonnen | ILRI | 911469056 |  | [k.mekonnen@cgiar.org](mailto:k.mekonnen@cgiar.org) |
| 12 | Martha Cronin | ICRAF |  |  | [m.cronin@cgiar.org](mailto:m.cronin@cgiar.org) |
| 13 | Melese Mulugeta | Worabe Agricultural Research Center | 912139507 | 467710305 | [melesemg@yahoo.com](mailto:melesemg@yahoo.com) |
| 14 | Peter Thorne | ILRI | 922786316 |  | [p.thorne@cgiar.org](mailto:p.thorne@cgiar.org) |
| 15 | Shimelis Mengistu | Areka Agricultural Research Center | 912846335 | 465520201 | [yaredm2009@yahoo.com](mailto:yaredm2009@yahoo.com) |
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| 17 | Sultan Usman | Sinana Agricultural Research Center | 913347620 |  | [sultanusm@yahoo.com](mailto:sultanusm@yahoo.com) |
| 18 | Tamiru Ketema | Sinana Agricultural Research Center | 924050751 |  |  |
| 19 | Temesgen Alene | Debre Birhan Agricultural Research Center | 920512116 |  | [temesgenalene11@gmail.com](mailto:temesgenalene11@gmail.com) |
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| 21 | Tesfaye Shiferaw | CIMMYT | 921999537 |  | [t.shiferaw@cgiar.org](mailto:t.shiferaw@cgiar.org) |
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| 23 | Tibebu Seifu | Jeldu Livstock Development and Health Care Office | 912208151 |  |  |
| 24 | Wakgari Keba | Bako Agricultural Center | 912048503 |  | [wkwakeba@gmail.com](mailto:wkwakeba@gmail.com) |
| 25 | Yibrah Birhane | Bassona Worana Agricultural Office | 912711057 |  |  |
| 26 | Zelalem Desta | Diga Agricultural Office | 911068384 |  |  |
| 27 | Zelalem Lema | NBDC/ILRI | 911725449 |  | [z.lema@cgiar.org](mailto:z.lema@cgiar.org) |

**Appendix 2. Expectations of participants from the SLATE training**

• Properly understand livelihood indicators

• Use the SLATE tool

• More experience from participants

• To get familiar with benchmarking tool (SLATE)

• Familiarizing with SLATE tool for sustainable livelihoods asset evaluation

• Common understanding on the objectives of Africa RISING and NBDC

• Experience sharing from different locations

• To well understand the SLATE tool and date collection and interpretation

• To clearly understand the objectives, principles of the sustainable livelihoods approach

• To learn a new tool

• To learn what benchmarking tool is

• A good background on livelihoods characterization

• Common understanding about Africa RISING project

• Experience sharing

• To look at ways to integrate tool with ICRAF approach (for Africa RISING)

• To potentially use tool in CRP1.2

• Learn more from the experts (farmers, development agents and participants about farming system in Ethiopia)

• How can we improve SLATE, combine it with other approaches to get closer to what we need?

• Learn about whether the assumptions we have in developing SLATE work

• Practical experience in the use of the tool

• Revision of the applicability of the toll after the field work

• Will be able to train other on how to use the benchmarking tool

• Come to a common understanding after the field work

• To know the techniques of how to collect, analyse and evaluate livelihood researches or assets with in a community, as well as major challenges of obstacles and possible opportunities available for the community

• Strong partnership

• Feedback on the strong and weak side of the SLATE tool

• I also hope to gain useful lesson from Jeldu field experience

• To well introduced to the concept of farm-benchmarking needs and techniques